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Files Show FBI Tried to Discredit Critic of Bureau

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J. Edgar Hoover's FBI tried to discredit a former agent who wrote critically of the bureau, slipping material to a television talk-show host, and looking into the possibility of printing 1,000 copies of a bad book review.

FBI files on the campaign to counter William Turner's critical writings show that the bureau's Los Angeles office provided background material to talk-show host Joe Pyne before the former agent appeared on television in 1968.

A bureau informant said he felt Pyne used the FBI material to "pretty well discredit Turner."

In 1970, the bureau cheered a Washington Star review slamming Turner's new book, "Hoover's FBI: The Men and the Myth." The FBI urged "that 1,000 copies of the book review be prepared in reprint form."

There was no indication in the FBI memos whether the bureau got around to printing the reviews and, if so, what was done with them.

Turner, contacted yesterday at his San Francisco home, called the campaign "a waste of taxpayers' money . . . a squandering of investigative time."

"What it boils down to is, they couldn't stand criticism," the 52-year-old former agent said. "They couldn't stand having their act exposed."

Turner, among the first of a series of ex-agents to write books about the bureau, said he sued the FBI last year on charges of infringing on his First Amendment rights.

FBI agents sign a pre-employment agreement not to divulge information obtained as a result of their work with the bureau, but no ex-agent has been prosecuted for a violation.

Files of the FBI's Turner campaign were released under the Freedom of Information Act.